

A Case Study On the Adoption of Digital Storytelling in ESL Classrooms to Induce Learning Motivation Among School Children in Rural Kelantan, Malaysia

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijelt.13/vol11n6121> Published September 30 2023

Citation: Said KM (2023) A Case Study On the Adoption of Digital Storytelling in ESL Classrooms to Induce Learning Motivation Among School Children in Rural Kelantan, Malaysia, *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, Vol.11, No.6, pp.1-21,

ABSTRACT: *This paper discusses the adoption of digital storytelling (DST) in ESL classrooms within rural settings in Malaysia. The general aim of this study is to explore how and to what extent engagement in DST activities would induce learning motivation towards ESL, both from the learners' and instructors' points of view. The study employed a case study approach, whereby semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations were conducted to gather qualitative data. 35 pupils and seven ESL teachers were involved. The results revealed that the pupils perceived DST activities as fun and interesting and would like to experience it again as they concurred that their learning motivation towards ESL was induced after being involved in DST-related activities. The teachers' responses were in parallel with the pupils' responses. Factors affecting pupils' engagement and participation during ESL lessons as well as factors affecting rural teachers' preference in adopting DST were also comprehended. The study provides insights to the education stakeholders in finding ways to meet the needs of rural school communities in Malaysia.*

KEYWORDS: digital storytelling, language learning motivation, rural, interest, second language anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

Enriching learners' aptitude in English as a second language has been one of the substantial and dominant research areas in education, and so does the research on motivation toward second language learning and acquisition. With the intention of uplifting the quality of teaching and learning experiences, numerous techniques and pedagogical strategies have been used by teachers, instructors, educators, and researchers. Hopefully, through fun and engaging experiences in learning it will then help to induce learning motivation towards English as a second language as well as enhance its proficiency among learners. Storytelling has been known as one of the most

common pedagogical strategies in ESL classrooms no matter what level they belong to. In any ESL classroom that adopts storytelling tools, teachers or instructors are required to orally narrate the story and it may also be aided with audio-visual elements. Audio-visual aids such as television, radio and video as well as social media are common modalities. Yet, today's storytelling activities usually involve more than the conventional modality, better known as multimodality. The multimodality may adopt various platforms such as face-to-face interactions, cybernated media via the Internet, digital audio and digital video to carry out storytelling activities. This teaching style is commonly acknowledged as a teaching and learning tool to many educationalists since it effectively engages learners in ESL classroom. Furthermore, a number of educational researchers and theorists have underscored storytelling as an effective teaching and learning method and deemed it as a reflective, transformative, and/or experimental teaching pedagogy. In addition to this, "storytelling can also help in enhancing communication skills, developing a diversity in life, learning skills and strategies, as well as literacy skills" (Rosli, R. M., & Idrus, F., 2017; Colville et al., 2012; Davidhizar & Lonser, 2003; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Communication skills is defined as the abilities to communicate with other people using suitable language in a given context to accomplish certain purposes, in which a person knows what to say, how to say, when to say, where to say, and why to say the messages, orally or in writing. Diversity of life means a variety in life style, learning styles and learning culture. Literacy skills however refer to the ability to read and write, including skills like critical thinking, listening, speaking, reading and presenting (Rosli, R. M., & Idrus, F., 2017). In terms of learning strategies, these are the techniques for students to act upon when learning or producing, or practicing the target language via role play, speech, show and tell and stage performance.

Through storytelling, when all these skills are combined together, it demands the learners to interact with one another in a language. This will unconsciously force the learners to manipulate the English Language in order for them to stay engaged in the activity. Personally, as a teacher, I always see this situation as a potential to motivate my pupils to learn second language. These motivated learners will soon resurrect among others the learning motivation towards English Language learning. Krashen (1981) concluded that "we acquire language in one way and only one way; when we get comprehensible input in a low learning motivation environment (p.131). He then added that the success of a language acquisition strongly relates to several factors namely the less anxiety towards speaking a language a student has, the better output he will experience during the learning or acquisition process. He also mentioned in his affective filter hypothesis that low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating learning motivation can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition (p. 131).

Research pertaining to motivation in second language learning unravelled that learning motivation will somehow affect language performance in the target language. This discovery is evident through the usage of communication strategies adopted by students

in language classrooms in which they normally tend to avoid difficult or personal messages in the second language. Effects are also visible in writing as well as overall language comprehension (Horwitz & Young, 1991). Authentic communication, which is necessary for acquisition and learning processes may become problematic in a second language due to learning motivation. The individual reaction may vary from simply procrastinating, and to entire rejection of language learning. The main cause being is low self-confidence. Horwitz and Young suggested that ‘solutions executed by a teacher to overcome language learning motivation include; being supportive, providing individual motivation and providing the students with sufficient knowledge on how to communicate in a certain situation. That will help students to evaluate their language performance and outcomes in order to draw realistic evaluations and make them aware of communication satisfaction’ (p.142).

In order to induce motivation, boost self-confidence, and overcome anxiety in second-language communication Horwitz and Young also suggested some activities that may help to fulfil these goals. They suggested implementing changes in classroom patterns and activities that helped change communication patterns which may reduce motivation, provoke or generate anxiety such as teacher-student situations where the teacher corrects the embarrassed learners’ errors, whereby situations should change to peer communication with the emphasis on conveying meaning and focus on communication and fluency instead of correctness (Horwitz & Young, 1991, p. 143). Storytelling might be a suitable tool, not just to induce learning motivation and provide for a change in ESL classrooms, but also to provide other positive effects on language teaching and learning.

In tandem with the Malaysian government’s effort to introduce and maintain innovative teaching learning in the classroom setting (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025), this study focused on several areas. The presence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) elements in digital storytelling as well as the representation and learning potential in English Language teaching and learning and ways as well as the extent to which digital storytelling can help to induce language learning motivation in pupils of primary schools in rural setting will be discussed. The language learning motivation involves the four skills in language learning and acquisition namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It is during the task completion stage that pupils engage in a series of digital storytelling classroom activities that require the practice of the target language and upsurge the learning motivation in themselves subconsciously. Therefore, the general aim of this study is to explore how and to what extent does the pupils’ engagement in digital storytelling activities would induce their learning motivation in English Language learning. This study also brought about the challenges faced by both pupils and teachers in adopting DST in their ESL classrooms. It’s essential to understand these terms in order to comprehend this study wholly;

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling (DST) is a storytelling method that is interwoven with digitized images, texts, sounds, and/or other digital elements, and it is frequently referred to as a practice method used in therapeutic or community settings (Chan & Yau, 2019; Sage, Singer, LaMarre, & Rice, 2018). In relation to education, digital storytelling or widely known as EDS (educational digital storytelling) is often presented as a powerful, technology-enhanced learning approach. Robin (2008), for example, commented that EDS enables students to develop 21st-century literacies, such as digital, technology, information, and visual (communication through images) literacies. Similarly, Ohler (2008) suggested that EDS blends the digital, art (design), oral, and written literacies. Barrett (2006) situated EDS in the classroom context and suggested that EDS facilitates the convergence of student-centred learning strategies such as technology integration, student engagement, reflection for deep learning, and project-based learning. The following definitions of motivation were gleaned from a variety of psychology textbooks and reflect the general consensus that motivation is an internal state or condition and is sometimes described as a need, desire, or want that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981).

- internal state or condition that activates behaviour and gives it direction;
- desire or want that energizes and directs goal-oriented behaviour;
- influence of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour.

Franken (2006) provides an additional component in his definition:

- the arousal, direction, and persistence of behaviour.

Simply defined, it is what people desire, choose to do, and commit to do (Keller, 2009). It is an internal process but can be inferred from observed choices, effort, intensity, and persistence. It is what initiates behaviour, controls its intensity, maintains behaviour, stops behaviour, and mediates choice (Weiner, 1992).

Interest

Researchers studying interest have focused on two different conceptions (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Baird, 1988): individual and situational interest. Individual interest is conceived of as a relatively enduring preference for certain topics, subject areas, or activities (Hidi, 1990; Prenzel, 1988; Renninger, 1990; Renninger & Wozniak, 1985; U. Schiefele, 1990), whereas situational interest is an emotional state brought about by situational stimuli (Anderson, Shirey, Wilson, & Fielding, 1987; Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Baird, 1986, 1988; Kintsch, 1980; Schank, 1979).

Language Learning Motivation

Crookes and Schmidt (1989) suggested that motivation to learn a language has both internal and external features. To Crookes and Schmidt, the structure of motivation includes four internal factors and three external factors. The internal, attitudinal factors are:

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- interest in the L2 based on existing attitudes, experience, and background knowledge on the learner's part;
- relevance which involves the perception that personal needs such as achievement, affiliation, and power are being met by learning the L2;
- expectancy of success or failure; and
- outcomes (i.e., the extrinsic rewards felt by the learner).

On the other hand, the external, behavioural characteristics include the fact that the learner:

- decides to choose, pay attention to, and engage in L2 learning;
- persists in it over an extended period of time and returns to it after interruptions; and
- maintains a high activity level.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign Language Anxiety or FLA is defined as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 129). FLA is also defined as “a complex emotion which has been discussed as being elusive and intricate” (Şimşek and Dörnyei 2017). Literature illuminated that it is “multidimensional” (Horwitz 2001, 2010; MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Young 1991). FLA has been “classified as a situation-specific learning motivation (Horwitz 2010; Horwitz, Horwitz, Cope 1986), which is distinct from other types of anxiety such as trait or state anxiety” (Gardner, 1985). Furthermore, the term FLA can be defined as “a process whereby negative thoughts or beliefs are created through the interpretation of negative emotional experiences in using and learning a foreign or second language” (A medical dictionary under nursing intervention defined learning motivation reduction as “a lessening or diminishing or minimizing apprehension, dread, foreboding or uneasiness related to an unidentified source of anticipated threat or danger”).

Rural

Rural as a setting in Malaysia is vaguely defined with reference to urban areas. Urban refers to areas that have a population of at least 10,000 with 60% of the population (aged 15 years and above) involved in non-agricultural activities (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Theoretically, despite the increase in the number of rural education research, educators across the globe have not come to an agreement as to the meaning of rural (Coladarci, 2007). Different people interpret differently the concept/definition of rural. Herzog and Pittman (1995) defined rural as an area that is not part of a city (or non-metropolitan area). Whereas, Farmer (1997) offered a more abstract concept stating that rural is the opposite of urban, as defined earlier in the paragraph. If urban is occupied by a large number of inhabitants, rural is a place with a small number of residents. Consequently, the definition of rural school which is often used by rural researchers is the one that was introduced by Johnson and Strange (2005). According to Johnson and Strange, a rural school is “a school which is located in a place inside or outside the metropolitan area and has a population of less than 2,500

people”. As for this research, the six participating schools are indeed from rural areas with the characteristics that befit the above definitions.

Theoretical Underpinning

Theoretically, five theories framed this study and each theory has its own constructs and principles that could be studied either separately or each other combined. This study illuminated that two learning theories namely Constructivism and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) complemented each other. Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism theory could not explain how and why some pupils were able to learn or acquire a language faster or more effectively without the inputs from Krashen’s SLA. The basic principles in Vygotsky’s ZPD and Krashen’s SLA are parallel with one another and they fit together to justify the use of digital storytelling (DST) activity. For example, ZPD is the developmental zone of learning while $i+1$ is the comprehensible input in the learning process that is also developmental. It is almost impossible with the help of technology that is encompassed in DST activities that connect one another in an engaging way. When learning is designed to be associated with certain tools, in this case, several face-to-face meetings and WhatsApp communication to complete the DST task that required the pupils to work collectively, Connectivism and Social Network Theory helped to support the justification for the learning process in contextual based. Overall, this study discovered that pupils successfully completed the tasks assigned to them. If they were dissatisfied with certain parts of their video production outcomes, for example, the dialogue or script writing, they opted for other means to make improvements by asking for help from more proficient friends, or family members or just going to their teacher. All these sub-activities reflected how the learning process was developmentally progressing. With surrounding inputs, pupils constructed their own understanding and meaning, as well as knowledge of the task, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. In a classroom activity, the constructivist viewed learning through different styles that were used during the making of digital storytelling. It can be shown by encouraging pupils and reflecting on and talking about the task (in the interview). Brooks (1999) in his study expounded that “as long as there were people asking each other questions, we have had constructivist classrooms. Constructivism, the study of learning, is about how we all make sense of our world, and that really hasn’t changed” (p.12). Scaffolding the processes that the pupils engaged in with technologies, through the usage of multimedia and virtual environment, besides consultation, helped to sustain the pupils’ interest in learning and attitude towards learning the target language. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of this scaffolding and that it is needed to guide pupils to master the knowledge and skills being learned. Once they have mastered the knowledge and skill, they will gradually disengage from the support system. In this study, the support they gained from their surrounding helped them to accomplish their tasks on their own. Technical support, motivational support, and intellectual support they obtained from their peers and teachers gradually made them independent at a later stage. Language

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inputs they encountered were genuine and rich as the context of interaction was relevant and meaningful to them. Therefore, word choices, language structures, and intonation of words they uttered and heard were meaningful to them in this language learning and acquisition process. Constructivism says that learning will be more meaningful for the learners when they interact with each other. Socially, they have to interact with peers and teachers so that they can apply the language with competency. Moreover, they are with the opportunity to challenge their language and communication abilities simultaneously. This is in sync with Krashen's i+1 in which learners should be given room or material for them to understand new things when they are involved in the activity without the teacher's intervention. In this research, the multimodality concept was permeated through the use of internet platforms such as face-to-face, WhatsApp, and other applications that enabled the pupils to interact online besides digital technologies such as video recording and YouTube videos which enhanced collaboration amongst them. Hence, this research incorporated the verbal and visual modes of communication fittingly. It was the intention of the researcher that the activities the pupils were involved in reflected multimodality.

METHODOLOGY

Using the digital storytelling activities in ESL classrooms, the four language skills were aspired to be enhanced. As students engage in targeted language practice, there will be an increase in both input and output activities. By incorporating digital storytelling activities that captivate and immerse students in enjoyable and interactive lessons, the natural inclination towards learning motivation is likely to be heightened. Besides inducing their language learning motivation, the activities are said to enhance their four language skills namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Simultaneously, in the process of completing the digital storytelling tasks, they get to acquire knowledge and skills in related Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

As the pupils engaged in the activities, there was a lot of qualitative data available before, during, and after the task completion. All the data from interviews and class observations was collected and analyzed. The summary of this study's research design is summarized in Figure 1 below.

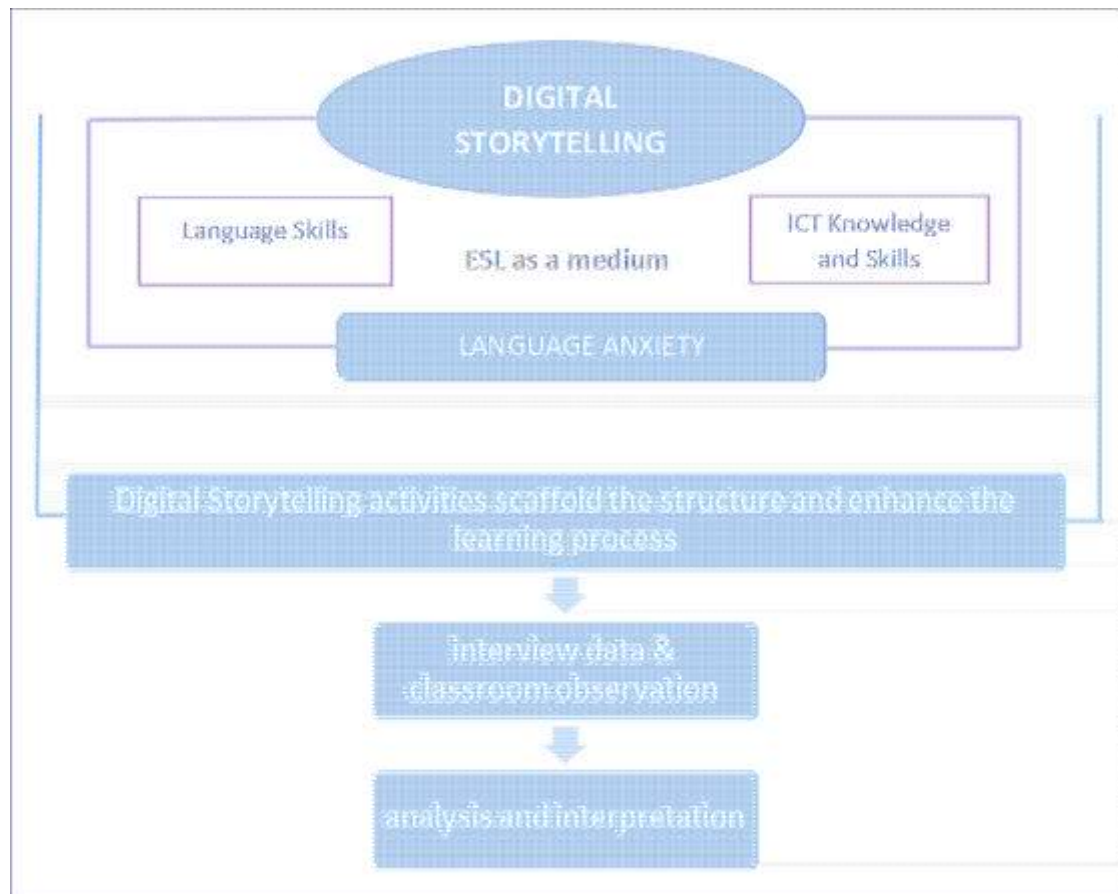


Figure 1 The Research Design

According to recent statistical data, out of the total 10,218 schools in Malaysia, approximately 42% (4,323 schools) are classified as rural schools. These rural schools accommodate approximately 22% (4,734,047 students) of the overall student population. (Educational Planning and Research Division, 2020).

Taking the rural area as the setting, this current study took place in a primary school in Dabong, Kuala Krai, Kelantan, Malaysia. Dabong is also known as Southern Kuala Krai (Kuala Krai Selatan) and it is indeed a small and remote town in the Kuala Krai District. There are six primary schools and one secondary school in Dabong, and all are public schools. A big majority of the population here is Malay. The 35 Malay, eleven-year-old children were selected as a focus group that reflected a homogenous, induced, and simplified group (Creswell, 2013). Hence, any interference of the other races that may carry different characteristics into the responses in digital storytelling activities could be kept as constant variables. This focused group of thirty-five pupils was divided into seven smaller groups of five members and involved in task-fulfilling observations. They were engaged in planning, role-playing, and video-making of a story. Seven

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pupils of fast, average, and slow learners from this focused group were selected with the recommendation of their English Language teacher and the children's agreement. On the instructors' part, seven ESL teachers from six different schools in the same vicinity were selected. All of the teachers have experience in conducting digital storytelling activities in their English Language classroom, or at least had experience adopting storytelling activities in his/ her English Language lessons.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom and video production process observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide extensive and in-depth qualitative data in addition to functioning as a means to verify and validate samples' learning and teaching processes and experiences observed during classroom activities. The instruments allowed for the triangulation of data and also served as a data enrichment tool. Figure 2 below illustrates the overall data collection method employed in this study and how each of the instruments helped to enrich and validate the data collected from various sources.

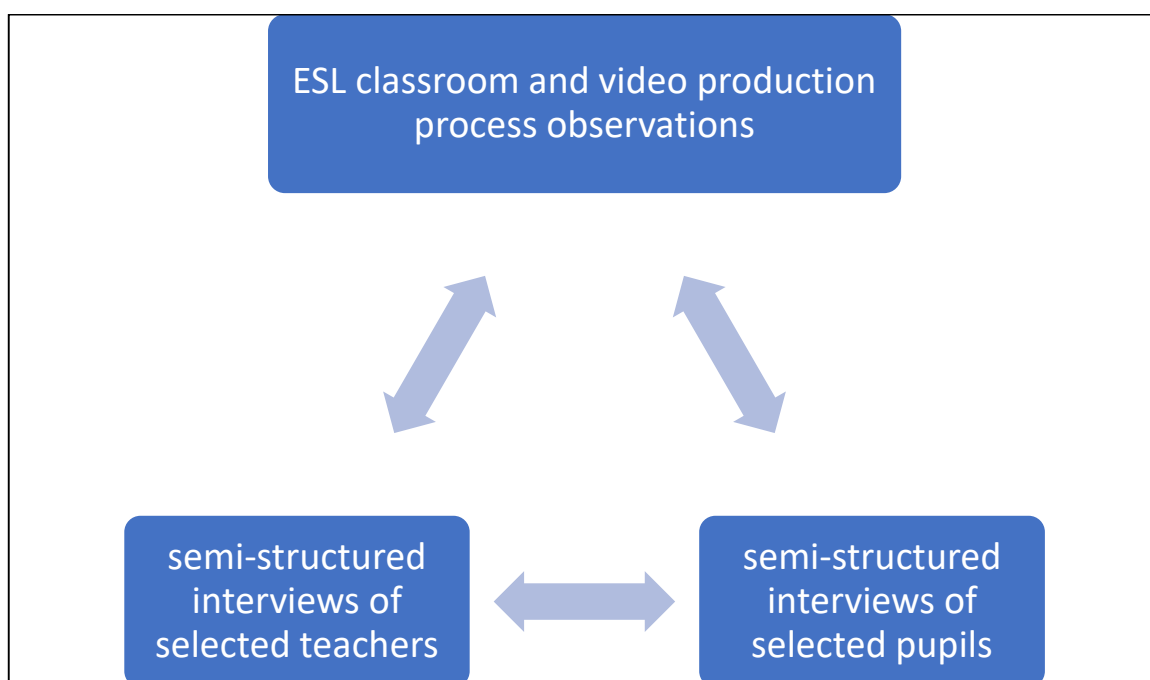


Figure 2 Data Collection Method

The observation method required the researcher to analyze pupils' responses, movements, and conversations during the fulfillment of the tasks in ESL classrooms which adopted digital storytelling activities. On the other hand, the interview method allowed the researcher to probe the pupils' (and teachers') views and experiences in considerable depth and breadth. It allowed the researcher to learn and affirm (Vockel & Asher, 1995) the pupils' (and teachers') personal feelings and views of their learning practice and experiences. The interviews also enabled the researcher to verify and

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validate the information gathered. Undeniably, the interviews highly supported the use of a case study in this research. The interviews conducted with the pupils and the teachers were transcribed and thematically coded using a coding system following Braun and Clarke (2006). In this study, the researcher manually analyzed following Braun and Clarke's 2006 thematic analysis model by organizing the data analysis into six phases. This is visualized in Figure 3 below.

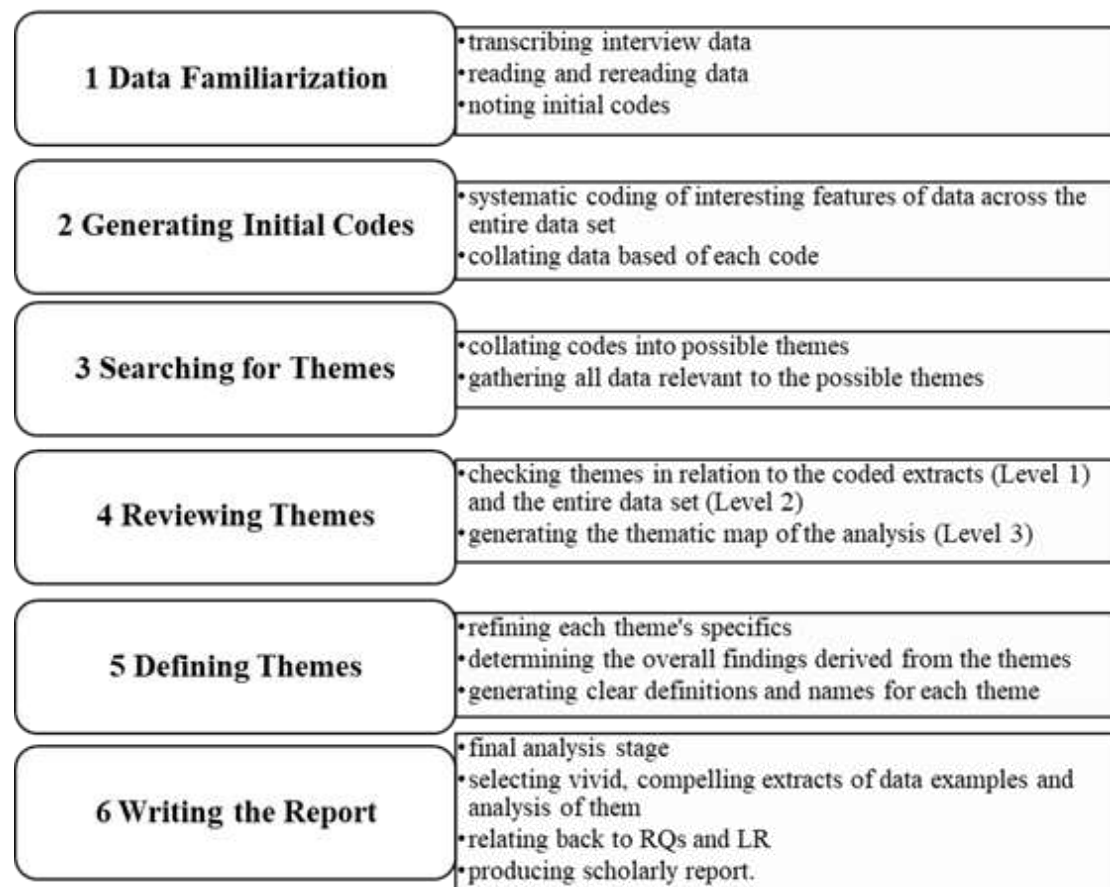


Figure 3 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006))

The thematic analysis was inductively approached whereby the data were coded without using a pre-existing coding frame and the analysis was data-driven (Patton, 1990; Braun & Clark, 2006). Meanwhile, the identification of themes was carried out at the latent level, through which the interpretation of the data goes beyond their semantic content as it allows the identification of “underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – the ideologies – that are theorized” (Boyatzis, 1998 as cited in Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 13) to underpin what the data actually revealed. In terms of the epistemological paradigm that vitalities the thematic analysis, the current research employed the ‘constructionist’ perspective to guide the analysis to conceive the socio-cultural and structural conditions shaping the phenomenon studied by taking into

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account the individual descriptions derived from the data (Burr, 1995; Braun & Clark, 2006).

FINDINGS

The presentation of the data findings is directed by the five research questions, answered and elucidated by the qualitative data collected from these instruments;

1. Non-participant classroom observation
2. Non-participant video production processes observation
3. Pupils' semi-structured interview responses
4. Teachers' semi-structured interview responses.

The data obtained from varying instruments were analyzed in order to extract the results. It then was triangulated to provide an overall picture of the findings as illustrated in Figure 4 below.

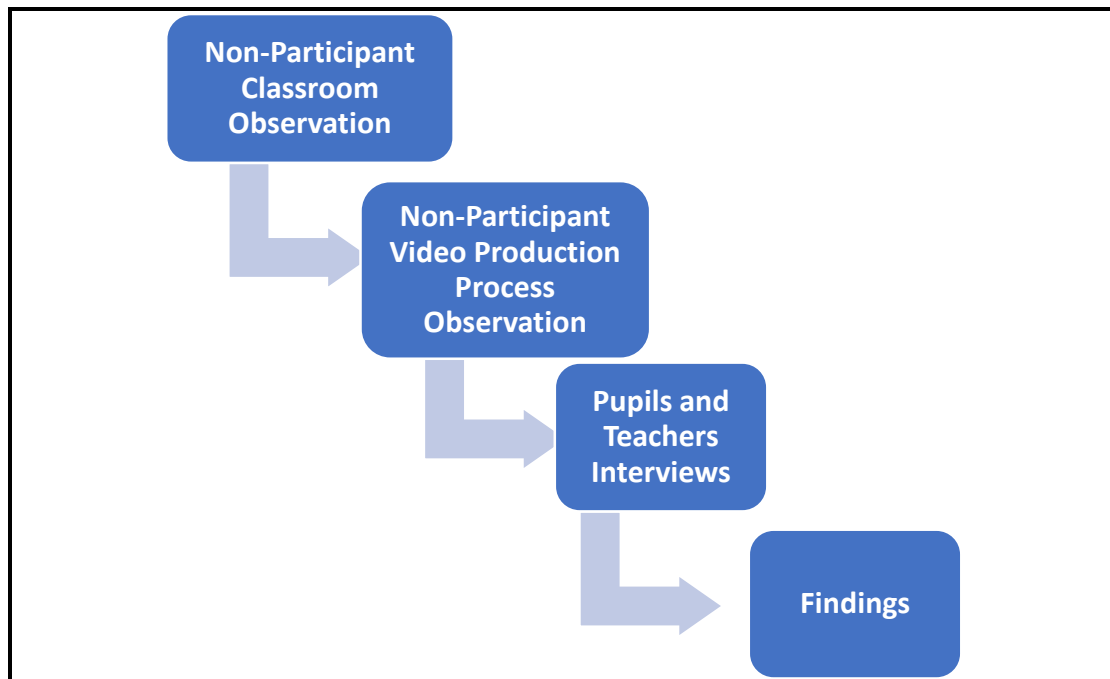


Figure 4 The Data Triangulation

Consequently, the findings were discussed in relation to the conceptual framework, theories, and related past studies. The findings showed that digital storytelling had been proven as an effective teaching and learning tool that was able to induce learning motivation in English as a second language classroom. The findings are summarized as follows:

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1. The pupils perceived digital storytelling activities as fun and interesting and would like to experience it in their ESL classroom again in the future.
2. The pupils acknowledged the criteria that led to the success of the digital storytelling task. The criteria are:
 - a. Time factor;
 - b. Physical factor;
 - c. Language and Communication Skills;
 - d. ICT skills;
 - e. Management skills; and
 - f. Commitment.
3. The pupils concurred that their learning motivation towards the English Language was induced after being involved in this digital storytelling activity.
4. The teachers favoured the conventional storytelling activity over the digital storytelling activity despite being fully aware of its benefits and potential.
5. The teachers were challenged with a lack of knowledge, inadequate skills, and lack of facilities. Thus, they were less motivated to adopt digital storytelling in their ESL classroom because they thought DST was time-consuming and did not suit them and their pupils.
6. The teachers concurred that their pupils' learning motivation towards the English Language has been induced after being involved in digital storytelling activities.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings is presented according to those five questions. How digital storytelling could contribute to the increment of learning motivation in ESL classrooms among rural school children is then discussed, by drawing in details of both pupils' and teachers' perceptions on how being involved with activities related to digital storytelling could help the learners in inducing their learning motivation towards the English Language. In addition to that, this part of the report also discusses the perception towards digital storytelling in ESL classrooms and its impact on pupils' learning motivation from both the learners' and the instructors' point of view.

Overall, the pupils have provided positive responses regarding their understanding of digital storytelling. The pupils realized that as storytelling is not new to them, digital storytelling is on the contrary, at least in the academic context. Nevertheless, they experienced being involved in both conventional and digital storytelling, in formal and informal settings. These findings were compatible with those in Friday's (2014) study which indicated that stories should be naturally conveyed to other people in societies. Therefore, with exposure to being involved in digital storytelling activities, pupils are able to convey stories to other people digitally, and that requires not just good English Language skills, but a combination of adequate ICT skills and also a high motivation level without anxiousness. The interviews with the pupils discovered that the pupils

found English Language class activities involving storytelling are not taboo as they had experience in storytelling-related activities before. What is new for them is the study of storytelling by producing video out of it and sharing it with everyone, or the term introduced to them as digital storytelling. Digital storytelling activities would allow pupils not only to combine oral but also ICT skills as well as technical skills besides visual and editing elements that are combined in a platform where pupils can enjoy, rest their worries towards the English Language, and get benefit from the activity regardless of their time and location.

In the study, the multimodality concept was incorporated through the use of digital technologies such as video recording and video-making computer applications. Hence, this research integrated the verbal and visual modes of teaching and learning appropriately. In a multimodal learning environment, pupils use digital and ICT devices as well as different types of texts and tasks (Walsh, 2010). This mode of learning environment is appealing to pupils' different sensory modalities such as visual and auditory modality as this kind of environment uses different modes, namely verbal and non-verbal modes to represent content knowledge. The non-verbal mode may include pictorial modes that comprise both static and dynamic graphs (Moreno & Mayer, 2007).

The findings from research questions and the probes that follows showed that among the factors affecting pupils' participation and engagement in ESL classroom adopting digital storytelling are as listed below.

- i. Time factor
- ii. Physical factor
- iii. Language and Communication skills
- iv. ICT Skills
- v. Management skills, and
- vi. Commitment.

Engaging and motivating students has become a focus that is as important as the content we teach. Student engagement can be defined as a student's willingness to be actively involved in school activities (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Students across the grade levels are engaged and motivated when they have control of their learning which is extended beyond the four walls of a classroom (Sadik, 2008; Yang & Wu 2012). In one of the earliest studies about students' motivation when using digital devices, Skinner and Belmont (1993) investigated the relationship between teachers' behaviour and student motivation. The findings showed that students' motivation and behavioural engagement had a correlation to the behaviour and involvement of the teacher. Skinner and Belmont concluded that students who were engaged knew the value of the investment of their learning and put forth effort to understand the content being taught. Thus, the key to student engagement is to motivate students in the classroom. Highly motivated pupils are pupils with low learning motivation in the classroom. Sadik (2008) concluded a positive impact of creating digital stories on student motivation and engagement.

This study proved that the findings and the probes that followed were tallied with previous literatures. Research done by Yang and Wu (2012) found that digital storytelling as a student-centred activity could engage students in taking control of their learning. It was found that digital storytelling as a student-centred activity could engage students in taking control of their learning. As a result, they were highly motivated to work with their peers. They increased collaborative, creative, critical thinking skills, technological skills as well their confidence in their writing skills. Therefore, integrating technology in storytelling moves students from working on traditional language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) to preparing them for 21st-century skills (Kervin & Mantei, 2011; Malita & Martin, 2010). The ability of pupils to take control of their learning process means that the learning motivation within them is under control. When the pupils carried out their digital storytelling presentations and shared their experiences with their classmates, it became quite a rewarding activity. Furthermore, as stated by Gregori-Signes (2008), it promoted creativity due to the multiple tools, both traditional and multimedia that the pupils will necessarily have to combine and master in order to produce the story (graphics, animated graphics, video, animation, text, photos, synchronous or (and) asynchronous audio transmission (Paul & Fiebrich, 2005). Moreover, as an educational tool, Herrera-Gutierrez et al. (2009) explained that DST offers personal as opposed to merely instructional ways of presenting teaching and learning material since the final product will always have the personal mark of the author (pupils) along with the ability to express oneself artistically (Skouge & Rao, 2009). The observations and responses from semi-structured interviews proved that the involvement in digital storytelling activities had motivated the pupils and at the same time induced the pupils' learning motivation towards digital storytelling in ESL Classroom English Language.

The teachers have responded positively to the use of digital storytelling activities over the conventional ones in their English Language classrooms. They fully understood the concept of storytelling, were able to express how digital storytelling differed from conventional storytelling, and were completely aware of what digital storytelling could offer in comparison to conventional storytelling. All of the respondents had experience in adopting storytelling in their ESL classrooms, whether conventional or digital. They also admitted that digital storytelling has a huge potential in their ESL classroom as it could be adapted to convey learning content, used as an assignment during school break, and could also be integrated in collaborative learning. Teachers were in favour of digital storytelling activities despite their current situation. Despite some teachers expressing lingering doubts about their decision, they demonstrated a willingness to implement digital storytelling (DST) activities in their classrooms, recognizing the importance of incorporating ICT in 21st-century learning. They also believed that despite their pupils' condition of lacking in facilities like a reliable Internet connection and gadgets, they still used the technology in one way or another and this would improve their ICT literacy over time. However, there were still a small number of teachers who were reluctant and not willing to adopt DST activities in their classrooms even though they viewed DST positively and were fully aware of its benefits and

potential. They believed that they were not capable of carrying out the DST activities with their pupils on the reason of facilities insufficiency.

The findings from in-depth semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations showed that several factors had hindered the teachers from adopting the digital storytelling method as a teaching and learning tool in their ESL classroom, even though they realized and were fully aware of its huge potential in education. The teachers were challenged with the lack of knowledge, inadequate skills, and lack of facilities. Thus, they were less motivated to adopt digital storytelling in their ESL classroom because they thought DST was time-consuming and did not suit them and their pupils. Fortunately, these teachers did not take these factors as reasons for them not to accept the infusion of ICT in their ESL classroom, rather they took them as challenges that needed to be overcome collaboratively. These findings are consistent with prior research (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011, p. 324; Obiri-Yeboah, Kwarteng & Kyere-Djan, 2013, p. 13), which has extensively explored factors that could impede teachers' adoption of technology in their teaching practices. For example, Hutchison and Reinking (2011, p. 324) listed barriers that may prevent teachers from using technology. They include a lack of understanding of how to integrate technology into instruction, professional development related to integrating technology into instruction, understanding of how to evaluate students' ability to use ICTs (Information Communication and Technology), and insufficient time due to high-stakes testing. Cassim and Obono (2011) found that the attitudes of teachers, their perception on the usefulness and ease of use of ICT, their ICT awareness, and school location all affect the adoption of ICT in the classroom. It was argued by Chigona and Chigona (2010) that other significant factors that hindered integration were personal factors such as insufficient ICT training, social factors as a result of rules that prescribe who can use technology and what it can be used for at schools, and environmental factors such as teachers lacking technical support regarding integrating technology into teaching. Similarly, Ahadiat (2005, p. 228) ranked factors that would prevent teachers from using technology. These factors include a lack of time, required software, technological support, relevance to course material, latest hardware, administrative support, contribution to professional advancement, and interest in technology.

Implication to Research and Practice

This study provides several research implications in the usage of digital storytelling as a teaching and learning tool in second-language classrooms in rural settings in Malaysia. In terms of the contribution of the research itself, this study would be among the first to offer scholarly inputs on the usage of digital storytelling as a teaching and learning tool that specifically focused on its effectiveness in promoting learning motivation towards English Language among rural primary school children. In terms of methodological contribution, it was conducted using a qualitative method, adopting a case study analysis approach, in which the findings were in-depth and sound. The research project was closely monitored to ensure concrete findings were obtained from classroom observations, video production process observations, and in-depth

interviews with the students and the teachers. Hence, the inputs that these sources provide were crucial and significant in paving the way for more understanding, or even building a research framework that is focused on the specific element of digital storytelling for the setting of different samples and geographical locations.

In terms of pedagogical implication, it is clearly realized that digital storytelling could be a very motivating and fruitful activity that requires pupils to use the target language in a fun and more engaging way. It was during the activity pupils were exposed to language inputs that were meaningful to them as the inputs were genuine and relevant. In other words, this digital storytelling could be the means to train the pupils to master the target language. As they interacted socially in the group, face-to-face, and virtual mode, with the help of technologies that scaffolded the process of learning, pupils would experience self-learning and group learning using the target language. In addition, they seemed to improve their confidence level to talk more in that non-threatening environment. By engaging in the activity, they also tended to improve their communication skills. Whilst multitasking afforded by the digital storytelling task could possibly harness positive educational outcomes among learners, improper use of the same activity could result in distraction and decreased performance on tasks as well as in academic achievement. As such, pupils' multitasking behaviour should be guided and controlled, particularly in complex and challenging tasks, which require a lot of focus and time, to avoid losing more time from switching back and forth between the tasks. In the delivery of digital storytelling in the English syllabus, finding the skills and the language would fold the process of learning. Teachers should not ask the pupils to do the learning on their own unless they are scaffolded in the system within the curriculum (Supyan Hussin, 2012). The scaffolding is meant to guide the pupils at the beginning stage, and gradually they are expected to be independent in their learning journey. Pedagogically, storytelling is one of the language activities that must be integrated with technologies that the learners are familiar and comfortable with. The implication of conducting the storytelling activities must be linked with the English Language syllabus and learning objectives, and they should not be carried out in isolation like a grammar drill.

Future Research

Among the areas commendable for further exploration to look into are as follows.

1. Replicating similar research in various locations in Malaysia especially rural and remote areas as well as aboriginal schools. Also, this research is deemed suitable for school children in urban areas as we will be able to find out if current technology i.e., digital storytelling will really benefit them academically.
2. Replicating similar research with different respondents i.e., secondary school students and tertiary level students.

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3. Replicating similar research with different purposes for example using DST to enhance communication skills or using DST to enhance fluency and accuracy in writing.
4. Replicating similar research in different subjects for example using DST in STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

CONCLUSION

This research started with the aim to examine the usage of digital storytelling in inducing learning motivation towards English Language among rural school children. The central question was “How does digital storytelling help to induce learning motivation towards English Language among school children in rural areas?” Five research questions were posed in order to answer the central question.

Both the pupils and teachers were aware of the differences between conventional and digital storytelling and were also well aware of the advantages and disadvantages offered by both pedagogical techniques. The researcher was made known of the skills that the pupils acquired while engaging in the given tasks. The pupils involved provided positive feedback on the usage of digital storytelling in learning English as a second language. All these findings were deliberated and had been related to the existing studies.

It could be perceived that the multimodality concept in digital storytelling has assisted pupils and teachers in creating enjoyable teaching and learning environments which then induced their learning motivation towards the English Language. Additionally, the pupils that assimilated the use of digital technologies such as video recordings and production using available digital applications of their choice, not only induced their learning motivation level but also enhanced their participation in learning processes. This study therefore has incorporated the multimodal learning environment and elevated pupils’ and teachers’ knowledge and skills in emerging technology usage.

The researcher concurs that formal face-to-face classrooms for teaching and learning can never be obsolete or replaced, but augmented with active participation, information gathering, content sharing, and social collaboration in preparing for the knowledge community of this digital era. Most importantly, digital storytelling is now taking its bigger portion as an alternative to face-to-face meetings not just in schools or universities but also in the working sector due to Covid19 pandemic. More and more educationists and employers are requesting digital storytelling videos from their pupils or students and potential employees. An obvious example is The Ministry of Education which made it compulsory for candidates who are interested in becoming trainee teachers in their Teachers’ Training Institute (Institut Pendidikan Guru) to produce videos on teaching assimilation, and physical tests. As the contemporary generation of youth might not be conformable to the traditional methods and approaches to teaching and learning, there is a high and urgent need for a blend of the old literacy and

technologies on video making and social networking applications in the teaching and learning process in this century onwards and also in preparing to live in the new norms due to Covid19 pandemic suffered globally. Albeit making appropriate and effective choices of the technological tools and the Internet-based can be challenging and devastating, it is mandatory for teachers to explore and find innovative ways for the best practice in teaching and learning. Currently, language use and practice are indeed being extended beyond the physical classroom boundaries through virtual classrooms such as Google Meet, Zoom, and WhatsApp applications. The adoption of digital storytelling techniques in these virtual classrooms is massive, from the planning stage by teachers or instructors up to the production stage by pupils or learners. This trend has opened up new and interesting areas for teaching and learning despite its difficulties and challenges.

It is hoped that this study could set a base for more studies using digital storytelling not just to induce learning motivation towards the English Language, but also to enhance the teaching and learning process for all learners regardless of their geographical background. This is because digital storytelling offers huge benefits and advantages, especially in the current emerging technological era and difficult and restricted movement orders in conjunction with the prevention of Covid19 outbreak. Digital storytelling enables the expansion of teaching and learning beyond restricted time and place, hence fading the demarcation of teaching and learning to such confined traditional classrooms.

Moving forward, the teaching and learning of ESL in Malaysia are now in line with the requirements stated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Digital storytelling could be considered as a productive type of teaching and learning tool that fits the demand of CEFR in regard to implementing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) within the curriculum. This was illuminated in a study conducted by Robin (2008) in which he concluded that digital storytelling promotes the utilization of digital resources needed to communicate in the digital era. Castelló et al (2011) together with Robin (2006) and Barret (2006) stated that digital storytelling is considered a strategic teaching method since it is appealing to students, who are involved in an active rather than a passive process. In completing digital storytelling tasks, students learn how to combine some basic multimedia tools (for example, graphics, animations, etc.) through activities as diverse as doing research, writing, delivering presentations, using technology, interviewing, improving interpersonal skills, learning problem-solving techniques, and assessment expertise. Sadik (2008, p.489) stated that “the interaction between students, the flow of ideas and thinking aloud encourage students to foster active learning, in which users discover and address gaps in their understanding when explaining concepts to others”. Additionally, it helps to improve language skills development, mainly speaking and writing along with researching, collaborative tasks, and working with computers. Barrett (2006a) found that digital storytelling facilitates the convergence of four student-centred

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learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into instruction.

All in all, this study would like to coin a new phrase, “technology rapidly emerges and affects every facet of our endeavours; thus, academicians must strive to keep pace with its advancements to ensure swift progress in the field of education.”

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